

till eight years after the baffled tyrant had left the scene of his work of blood and ruin. At first his policy was the same as that which had inspired opposition to Granvelle—hatred of religious persecution, hatred of the one man domination, which, in Alva, was synonymous with pure despotism. As the struggle progressed, it became more definite, decisively Protestant. He demanded as a minimum the restoration of ancient rights and privileges, the withdrawal of the Spaniards, the recognition of the reformed faith in accordance with God's word, and freedom of worship. The last was an absolutely impossible stipulation. Philip would never be the sovereign of heretics, and heretics were emphatically excepted from the so-called pardon so grandiloquently proclaimed by Alva in July 1570. Was not heresy the most malignant form of rebellion against the sovereign, the toleration of it the most fearful of sins against God ? William, nevertheless, disclaimed the charge of rebellion. Religion, he insisted, is a matter of conscience, and with a noble anticipation of the future he denied the right of prince, priest, or minister to persecute, and opposed the Calvinist zealots who clamoured for the suppression of Catholicism with pains and penalties. To obey God rather than man was a duty which even Papist theologians admitted when it suited them ; and if such obedience was no rebellion in a Papist, it is not easy to see why it should be rebellion in a Protestant. And no one had a better right to appeal to the supreme voice of conscience in this matter than the man who was himself so free from the rampant bigotry of the age.

Even on political grounds, he professed himself innocent of rebellion. He fights, not 'against his sovereign but the irresponsible tyranny of his sovereign's representative. He recognises the legal authority of Philip, and is willing to maintain it. He distinguishes between the sovereign and his representative. It was in reality a distinction without a difference. William knew well enough that Alva was Philip. Had he not brought a trunkful of blank warrants to which the king's signature was affixed, and on which he could write the arbitrary sentences and decrees of his despotic will ? Did not Philip rejoice grimly in Alva's Council of Blood and its horrible doings? Had he not confirmed the monstrous decree